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ABSTRACT

This instructional module on listening and the older adult is one in a block of 10 modules designed to provide the human services worker who works with older adults with basic information regarding the aging process. An introduction provides an overview of the module content. A listing of general objectives follows. Two sections present informative material on each of the two objectives. Topics are the importance of listening and how to listen. Other contents include a summary and listings of selected readings and additional resources. (YLB)

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BLOCK A

Basic Knowledge of the Aging Process

MODULE A·10

Listening and the Older Adult

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Elderly Service Workers' Training Project

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LISTENING AND THE OLDER ADULT
MODULE A.10

THE ELDERLY SERVICE WORKERS' TRAINING PROJECT WISHES TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION OF THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE "LISTENING AND THE OLDER ADULT" MODULE.

MR. R. P. CARRIERO, CONTENT CONTRIBUTOR

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Introduction

A COMMON PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED BY MANY INDIVIDUALS IS THEIR INABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE. PERHAPS IT CAN BE SAID THAT THIS PROBLEM BECOMES EVEN MORE APPARENT IF YOU HAPPEN TO BE A CAREGIVER AND VALUE THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN YOUR DAILY WORK WITH OLDER ADULTS.

BY LEARNING HOW OLDER ADULTS FEEL AND WHY THEY FEEL THE WAY THEY DO, HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS CAN IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNICATION SKILLS. WE GAIN A GREAT DEAL OF WISDOM FROM THE PROCESS OF LISTENING.

THE TWO MAIN PURPOSES OF THIS MODULE ARE TO ASSIST THE HUMAN SERVICE WORKER: (1) TO DEVELOP THE CORE CONDITIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS : EMPATHY , RESPECT, GENUINENESS , AND (2) TO DEVELOP ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS MODULE, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

1. DESCRIBE THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING.
2. DESCRIBE A FEW SIMPLE PRACTICES THAT ONE MUST FOLLOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE , CAREFUL LISTENER.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION WILL PRESENT THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS SECTION , YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DESCRIBE THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING.

SITUATION

MARGUARITE HAD LIVED ALONE FOR TEN YEARS AND HAD NO TROUBLE DEALING WITH ALL THE CHORES THAT ONE MUST TAKE CARE OF WHEN OWNING A HOUSE. SHE MANAGED HER MONEY ESPECIALLY WELL AND EVEN THOUGH HER INCOME WAS SMALL AND CONTINUALLY BECAME SMALLER WITH INFLATION, SHE KEPT HERSELF AND HER PROPERTY IN GOOD REPAIR. THE LAST FEW YEARS, SHE HAD REMINDED HER CHILDREN THAT SHE WAS "SLOWING DOWN", AND THAT SHE WOULD ONE DAY HAVE TO GO TO ONE OF THOSE "NICE" APARTMENT BUILDINGS THEY'RE PUTTING UP FOR PEOPLE "LIKE ME."

MARGUARITE WAS SEVENTY-EIGHT YEARS OLD LAST SEPTEMBER. IN OCTOBER, MARGUARITE SLIPPED ON HER WAY HOME FROM THE STORE. SHE WAS, IN A WAY, LUCKY THAT SHE WAS NOT SERIOUSLY HURT, BUT HER INJURY KNOCKED HER OFF HER FEET FOR A FEW WEEKS AND MARGUARITE DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO MOVE.

HER DOCTOR AND HER SON GOT HER INTO A FINE NEW BUILDING. MARGUARITE HAD TO MOVE QUICKLY AND HAD TO LEAVE TO HER SON THE PACKING, SELLING, AND SORTING THAT GOES WITH SUCH A MOVE.

MARGUARITE FELT SAD AND UPSET LEAVING HER HOME. HER NEW APARTMENT WAS FURNISHED AND THOUGH SHE WANTED TO BRING A FEW OF HER FAVORITE CHAIRS AND TABLES WITH HER, THERE WAS NO ROOM. MARGUARITE WEPT WHEN SHE CAME INTO HER APARTMENT. HER SON BECAME CONCERNED AND PHONED A COUNSELLOR WHO PROMISED TO LOOK IN ON MARGUARITE. MARGUARITE CRIED AND TOLD THE COUNSELLOR ABOUT HER HOUSE, HER FURNITURE, AND BITS AND PIECES OF HER LIFE. AFTER A WHILE, THEY HAD TEA AND MARGUARITE ASKED ABOUT THE APARTMENT BUILDING, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, AND ASKED THE COUNSELLOR IF SHE "OFTEN SAT AROUND WATCHING OLD LADIES CRY?" MARGUARITE STILL GOT TEARY-EYED WHEN SHE SPOKE OF HER HOUSE, BUT THE COUNSELLOR DESCRIBED HER LATER AS "INTELLIGENT, AWARE, AND COMPETENT - WITH A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR AND A LOVELY LAUGH. MARGUARITE IS FUN TO VISIT."

WHY LISTEN?

THERE ARE TWO REASONS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO LISTEN CAREFULLY TO PEOPLE. FIRST, WE MUST HELP THE MARGUARITES OF THIS WORLD TO MAKE TRANSITIONS. IT WOULD SEEM THAT ANYONE LISTENING CAREFULLY TO MARGUARITE WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD WHAT SHE WAS EXPRESSING WITH HER TEARS AND WOULD HAVE RESPECTED HER EXPERIENCE.

SECONDLY, BY LISTENING CAREFULLY, WE CAN HELP THE PERSON IN NEED TO COMMUNICATE MORE OPENLY AND FULLY. AS HELPERS ,WE HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO LEARN. WE ARE ESPECIALLY SHORT ON WISDOM ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE THE ELDERS IN OUR WORLD. IF WE WANT TO BE GOOD HELPERS, WE FIRST MUST LEARN FROM THEM.

IN ORDER TO LEARN, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE OTHER PERSON'S POINT OF VIEW. BY BEING UNDERSTANDING AND EMPATHIC, WE ARE LISTENING EFFECTIVELY. AS MARGUARITE WAS LISTENED TO, SHE WAS ABLE TO REGAIN HER BALANCE AND HER COMPETENCE. SHE WAS IN THE PROCESS OF GAINING SOME PERSPECTIVE ON THE EVENTS IN HER LIFE WHEN SHE WAS HEARD.

ONE CAN GAIN A GREAT DEAL OF WISDOM FROM THE PROCESS OF LISTENING. FROM MARGUARITE'S STORY, IT CAN BE LEARNED THAT PEOPLE IN THIS STAGE OF LIFE NEED TO TELL THEIR STORY...THEY NEED TO TALK ABOUT EVENTS AND

PEOPLE SO THAT THEY CAN MAKE SENSE OF THE CHANGES THEY ARE MEETING.

AS WELL, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT EVERY CHANGE ONE MAKES ADDS TO THE EXISTING LIFETIME'S WORTH OF CHANGES. ALL OF THESE MUST BE ADJUSTED TO. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT, IF ONE LISTENS CAREFULLY TO ANOTHER, ONE WILL DISCOVER THE OTHER'S COMPETENCE AND CHARM. WHILE IT SEEMS SILLY TO MENTION THAT OLD AGE DOES NOT BRING INCOMPETENCE, THE NUMBER OF INSTANCES WHERE THE ASSUMPTION OF INCOMPETENCE HAS DONE MISCHIEF TELLS US THAT THIS TRUTH BEARS REPEATING.

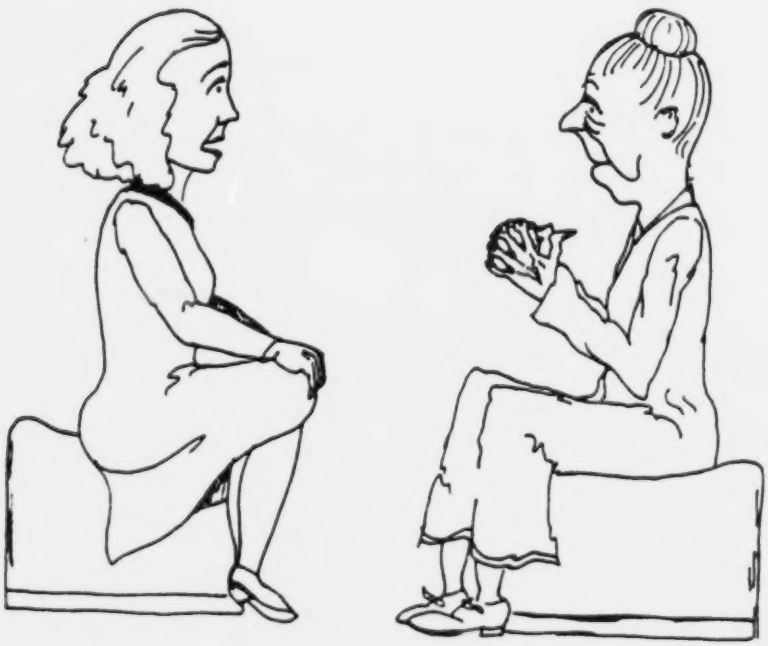
THE FOLLOWING SECTION WILL PRESENT A FEW SIMPLE PRACTICES THAT ONE MUST FOLLOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE, CAREFUL LISTENER.

HOW TO LISTEN

UPON COMPLETION OF THIS SECTION , YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DESCRIBE A FEW SIMPLE PRACTICES THAT ONE MUST FOLLOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE , CAREFUL LISTENER.

PHYSICAL POSITION

THERE ARE A FEW SIMPLE PRACTICES THAT CAN HELP ONE TO "LISTEN" IN A CAREFUL AND EFFECTIVE WAY. SOME OF THESE INVOLVE PLACING ONESELF IN A PHYSICAL POSITION WHERE ONE CAN HEAR WELL. ONE MUST NOT BE PHYSICALLY ABOVE ANOTHER PERSON WHILE ATTEMPTING TO LISTEN. THIS WILL SAVE A LOT OF STRESS ON NECKS AND REDUCE FATIGUE.



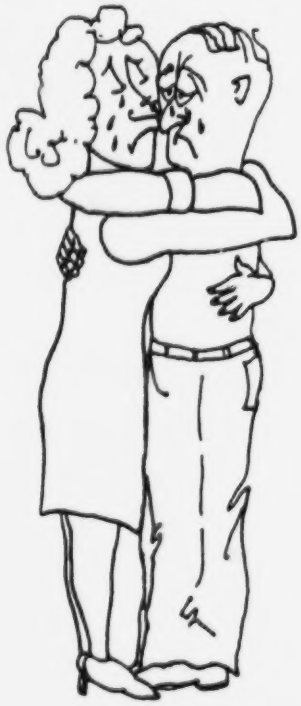
GET AT EYE LEVEL WITH THE SPEAKER.

WHEN TWO PEOPLE FACE ONE ANOTHER AT EYE LEVEL AND MAINTAIN A CLOSE BUT COMFORTABLE DISTANCE, THE CHANCE OF EITHER BEING DISTRACTED, BY PASSERSBY OR BY CLOCKS, IS MINIMIZED. SOMETIMES THESE PRACTICES REQUIRE SOME INGENUITY...AS WHEN THE SPEAKER IS LYING ON A BED, BUT STAYING AT AN EVEN EYE LEVEL IS TOO IMPORTANT TO IGNORE NO MATTER WHAT THE CONDITIONS.

REMEMBER ALSO THAT ONE CAN'T HEAR WELL FROM A GREAT DISTANCE.

ROLE OF THE LISTENER

ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT LESSONS FOR A CAREGIVER TO LEARN IS THAT LISTENING DOES NOT INVOLVE FIXING UP THE SPEAKER. IF SOMEONE IS TELLING YOU OF HIS OR HER SADNESS, AND BEGINS TO CRY, YOUR JOB IS NOT TO TAKE AWAY THE SADNESS...YOUR JOB IS TO LISTEN TO THE SADNESS. OFTEN, WHEN WE TRY TO MAKE PEOPLE FEEL BETTER, WE END UP TELLING THEM THAT THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THEM FOR FEELING AS THEY DO. THIS IS TRUE OF ANY FEELING THAT FOLKS MIGHT EXPRESS...JOY, FEAR, ANGER OR WHATEVER.

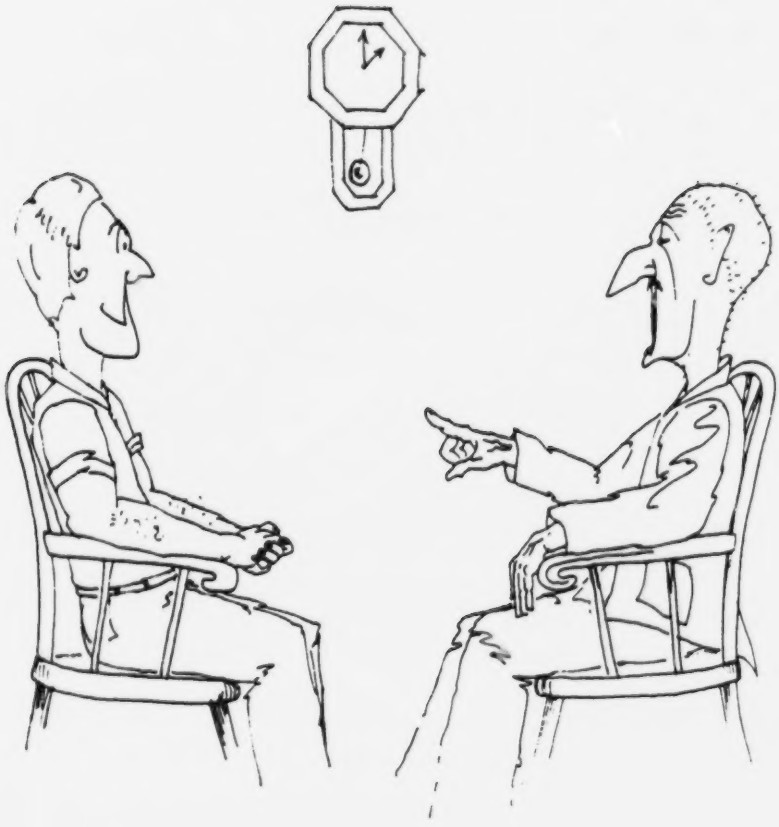


LISTENING IS HELPING

SLOW TIME

THE LAST PRACTICE, AND PERHAPS THE MOST BASIC, IS THAT OF GOING ON "SLOW TIME". FOR VARIOUS REASONS, THERE ARE GROUPS OF PEOPLE WHO MUST FUNCTION AT A SLOW PACE. THESE GROUPS RANGE FROM CHILDREN TO THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED TO THOSE WHO ARE OLDER. BEING ON SLOW TIME PROBABLY REPRESENTS A VERY HEALTHY STATE OF MIND.

WHEN ONE IS ON SLOW TIME ONE SEES AND HEARS MANY THINGS THAT OTHERWISE WOULD ESCAPE NOTICE. WHEN ONE IS LISTENING IT IS BEST IF ONE SHIFTS INTO SLOW TIME. THIS MEANS THAT YOU MUST ACCEPT THE OTHER'S PACE OF SPEAKING, THE OTHER'S DIGRESSIONS, THE OTHER'S SENSE OF TIME...TO LISTEN ONE MUST TAKE TIME. BEING ON SLOW TIME SAVES YOU THE INEFFICIENCY OF BEING OUT OF RHYTHM WITH THE SPEAKER.

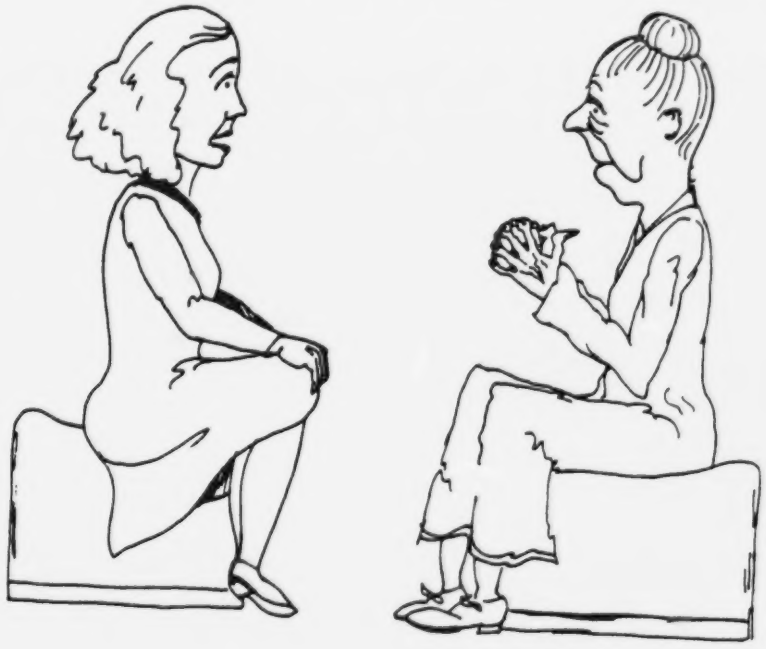


SLOW TIME

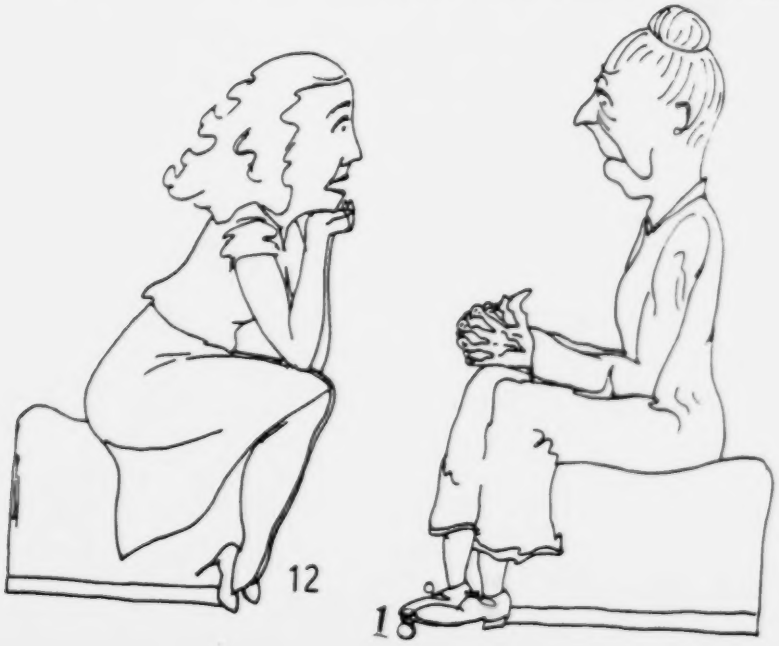
SUMMARY

THE PRACTICES THAT ONE SHOULD FOLLOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE, CAREFUL LISTENER ARE;

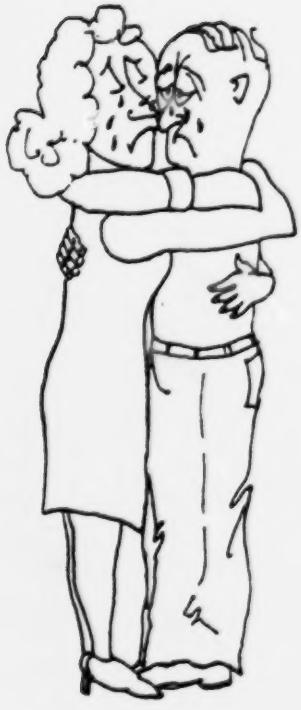
1. GET AT AN EVEN EYE LEVEL WITH THE SPEAKER.



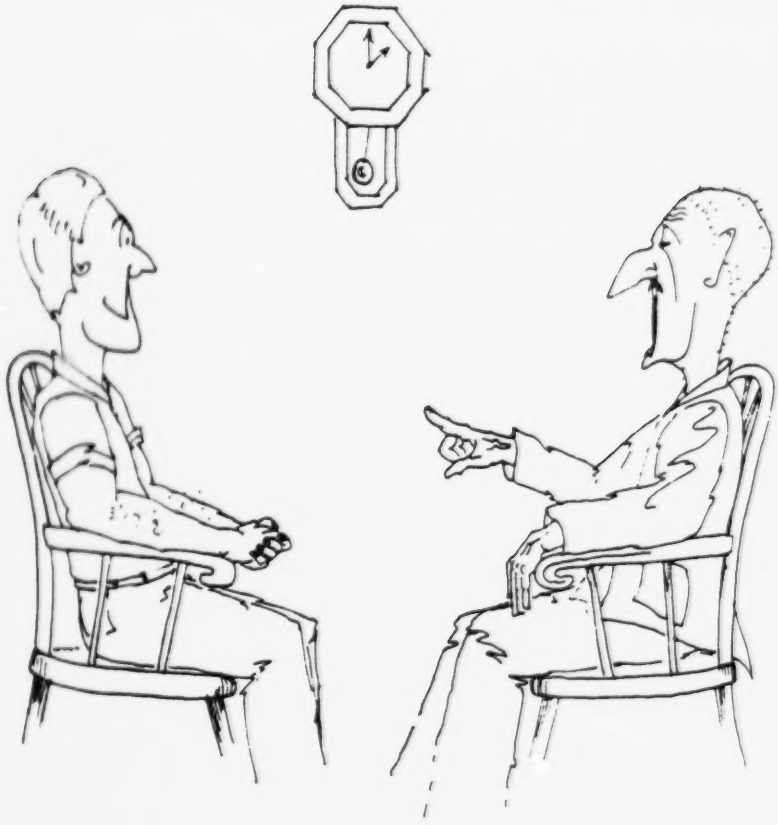
2. BE CLOSE...BUT RESPECT THE OTHER'S SPACE.



3. WHILE YOU ARE LISTENING, DON'T TRY TO "FIX THINGS UP", AND ...



4. GET ON SLOW TIME.



APPENDIX

Selected Readings

Brammer, L.M. (1985). The helping relationship (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Levinson, D.J. (1978). The seasons of a man's life. New York Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Walsh, F. (Ed.). (1982). Normal family processes. New York: The Guilford Press.

Additional Resources

Place: National Film Board of Canada
245 Main St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada, R3C 1A7

Bravery In The Field

A dramatic film which portrays the frustrations and hostilities of two men who lack a sense of place and purpose. The older one, a war veteran now lost in time, and the younger one, an aimless drifter, are caught in circumstances which lead them to better understand each other. Stimulating in the discussion of goals, and the problems of aging. A teachers' guide is available.

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28 minutes : 35 seconds 106C 0179 127

Nell And Fred

Two old people consider the pros and cons of entering an old people's "home". Nell is in her eighties, Fred in his nineties. They are both strong-willed and independent, but they can't get around as easily as they once could. They must choose between doing as well as they can on their own, or moving to a new senior citizens' residence being built in their community, where they would be well-cared for, but where few decisions would be left to them. Would it be home? Could they, after managing their own affairs for so long a life, still be themselves? Their decision provides useful debate for audiences. The film was photographed and directed by Nell's grandson, Richard Todd.

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28 minutes:05 seconds Black & White 106B 0171 023 NFB

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Mr. Will Dickson, Director, Studio 2 Theatre Group
Ms. Margaret Downie
Mr. Sheldon Fink
Ms. Primrose Hopkins
Ms. Sheila Maurer
Ms. Marianne Neild
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Additional Transparency Slides were made available by:

Manitoba Department of Health, Home Economics
Manitoba Heart Foundation

TITLES OF THE TRAINING PROJECT'S MODULES

BLOCK A: BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF AGING PROCESS

A.1 PROGRAM PLANNING FOR OLDER ADULTS
A.2 STEREOTYPES OF AGING
A.3 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ASPECTS OF AGING
A.4 SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AGING
A.5 PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF AGING
A.6 DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT
A.7 PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF AGING
A.8 CONFUSION AND THE OLDER ADULT
A.9 NUTRITION AND THE OLDER ADULT
A.10 LISTENING AND THE OLDER ADULT

BLOCK B: CULTURAL GERONTOLOGY

B.1 UKRAINIAN CULTURE
B.1.1 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT
B.1.2 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT

B.2 GERMAN CULTURE
B.2.1 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT

B.3 FRENCH CULTURE
B.3.1 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT

B.4 NATIVE CULTURE
B.4.1 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT
B.4.2 COMMUNICATION AND ADJUSTMENT

BLOCK C: WORK ENVIRONMENT

C.1 WORK ENVIRONMENT I

NOTE: MOST MODULE'S ARE AVAILABLE IN TWO FORMATS:

A) PRINT FORMAT

OR

B) INTERACTIVE VIDEO (COMPUTER ASSISTED TELEVISION) FORMAT

RESOURCE MATERIALS:

HANDBOOK OF SELECTED CASE STUDIES
USER'S GUIDE